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# **A PLEA FOR PEACE**

AND

**A PLATFORM FOR THE TIMES.**

## CORRESPONDENCE.

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PHILADELPHIA, JANUARY 26, 1863.

MY DEAR SIR:

The conversations which we have entertained on several occasions, in Washington and elsewhere, on the present critical condition of our country, have left the important points made by you deeply impressed upon my mind. May I beg of you to reduce your views to writing, and send them to me, with permission to use them, as they may be thought available at the present momentous period, in indicating to the public mind, a fair and patriotic movement by which our political institutions may be saved from final overthrow and ruin.

Very respectfully, yours,

F. A. VAN DYKE.

To \*\*\*\*\* Washington, D. C.

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To F. A. VAN DYKE, M. D., PHILADELPHIA.

MY DEAR SIR:—As your request, for some of my views on the subject of the present political crisis, is evidently made with a desire for their publication, either for private circulation or more general perusal, I have drawn up a paper embodying them, at least in part, which I herewith communicate to you, and place at your disposition, to make such use of as you may elect. Some parts of it might be, perhaps, advantageously enlarged upon, but I have endeavored to avoid any unnecessary amplification, lest it might be considered too long.

It has been my wish to traverse all those platforms of ultra reformers and fanatics which have deluded so many in the North, whose authors may be said to have produced our present unfortunate situation. I flatter myself that my views will meet the approbation of all sound Democrats, and in fact of all conservative Republicans.

They of course will disagree with me, who “deny that religion is to be taken on *any* authority,” who would rather destroy the Constitution than let Slavery outlive its constitutionally appointed time, who assert that “untimely and excessive care for the Constitution has become the greatest danger of our country,” who admire “earnest folly in preference to” what they call “heartless wisdom”—but all who revere the law, respect the Constitution and its compromises, trust in God, love their country, and are willing to deal *justly* with their fellow-countrymen, will feel disposed to stand, fearlessly and boldly, upon the plea and platform I send you, as the *only one* by which they can hope to secure, at the coming elections, a change in official incumbency, as the only means of effecting an improvement in our position. The true issue must be squarely met, and I think you will agree with me, that that is correctly set forth in the accompanying paper, in one word,—PEACE.

I am, very truly, &c., yours,

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WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 19, 1863.



# A PLEA FOR PEACE

AND

## A PLATFORM FOR THE TIMES.

1. ALL men are created equal only in the identity of their moral character, and the oneness of their moral responsibility before the law.

2. Moral responsibility is created by law; is conventional, not natural. "Where there is no law, there is no transgression;" and consequently no responsibility.

3. The moral law is not a natural law. It is the creature of God's will. Its effect is to restrain that natural liberty, which would destroy whole races, before the light of reason would show how wrong it is to rob, steal, murder, bear false witness, or covet another's goods; before it would discover how absurd it is to worship a plurality of gods, or how useful is one day's rest in seven, or how wise is the prohibition of marriage within the fourth degree of consanguinity.

4. Man has no natural rights inherent in himself; all are accorded him by law. No man is created free, but every where he is created subject to the law. He is every where "put into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it," and he is every where commanded "of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it."

5. Identity of moral responsibility does *not* "necessarily imply an equal right to freedom of action." No man needs greater freedom than the law for the time being allows him. The law does not destroy freedom of action. It only, for the common good, defines what is right, and what is wrong, and restrains and punishes evil-doing; "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

6. Political rights inhere naturally in no person of any name, race, or condition. They are the creatures of conventions among men. In principle the conventional relations established by law between husband and wife, parent and child, guardian and ward, master and apprentice, patriarch and slave, government and its subjects, differ in no respect. The principle of obedience is the same in all, and there is no other principle in them; and the duty of obedience is an arbitrary dictation of law, whereby "the higher powers" restrain what would otherwise be the natural liberty of mankind. The federal government has no more right to interfere with any one of these relations as established in any of the States, than it has with the others. Free-loveism is the logical counterpart of Abolitionism.

7. Every State, by the common consent of nations, has a right to make its own laws. In some States all men are equally free before the law. Where the law establishes distinctions, it varies the kind and degree of responsibility.

8. Neither is it "necessary that all men should be equally free, because they have to give an account of their actions." If so, every country must be revolutionized, before an account can be justly required, and all mankind should be made amenable to but one tribunal, and all should be brought under one common-law—theological. Men have no other account to give, than how they have behaved themselves, in the lot in life in which they have been placed, or which under Providence has been assigned them. "Act well your part, there all the honor lies." And this is no contradiction, as some would assert, of the dogma, that "God is no respecter of persons."

9. There is no commandment against Slavery in the moral law, or any where in the Scriptures. There is a commandment which requires that which is Cæsar's to be rendered unto Cæsar. There is an Apostolic dictum—"the powers that be are ordained of God; whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance." There are laws in municipal codes establishing slavery. It has universally prevailed, and been sanctioned by the laws of every land, from Moses to the Convention which formed the Constitution of the United States. The law of the land governs by divine right. In honoring the law, God is served. "Fear God, honor the king," is a divine precept.

10. If "all laws for the subjection of one individual, one race, or one community to the absolute control of another are essentially vicious, void, and may be rightfully resisted," then are all measures for the subjection of the South to the absolute control of the Union, not distinctly authorized by the federal compact, essentially vicious, void, and may be rightfully resisted.

11. If "the right to the soil is natural, absolute, and equal as the right to light and air," as the right to breathe and see, then are all the laws of property infringements upon natural and inherent rights, and communism should prevail. But no man has a right to use his breath or eyesight except for the common good—that is, according to law,—the law of the land, the law of honor, the Scriptures, the articles of war, and even martial law, which has no sanction except the will of the military commander. The use of either may be regulated by law.

12. The province of the chief Executive is to protect persons, property, and industrial pursuits, according to the laws of the land, constitutionally enacted by the parties interested. When States, as in this country, are the convening parties, the general government under the compact is neither obligated nor authorized to protect the citizens of the States, or interfere with them in their persons, property, and pursuits, in matters upon which they have not expressly surrendered their original powers of legislation. In all such cases the laws of the States must govern,

whether there is or is not an express agreement to that effect in the federal compact. The States are the immediate convening parties to the government of the United States. The citizens of the States are subject to it only wherein they have so stipulated. Governments are bound, like masters to their servants, to give to their subjects "that which is just and equal." But no "*person*" living in any such State, who is not a citizen thereof, under the laws thereof, has any right to claim the protection of the general government, or invoke its legislation in his behalf, for he is not a citizen of the Union or Federation. The States never having delegated to the federal government any power to legislate upon Slavery, nor the State of Maryland to interfere with it in the District of Columbia, all laws abrogating it are vicious, void, and may be at pleasure rightfully resisted, because they infringe upon legislative rights by common consent vested in the citizens of those States. Slaves are not citizens, and their existence should be ignored in the national legislature. When a superior and an inferior race coexist in the same country, the happiness and prosperity of both require that one should be in subjection to the other.

13. But all such laws are unconstitutional. By a certain compact, express provision is made for the rendition of fugitive slaves. The action of the general government is limited to this one single subject of legislation and adjudication, thus reserving to the citizens of the States the right to property in slaves. In ceding the District of Columbia, it was expressly stipulated by Maryland that Congress should make no changes in the organic law. This was a condition of the grant, and this condition having been lately violated by the federal government, the District is fairly forfeited to the State of Maryland.

14. All laws and measures violative of the federal compact may be at pleasure rightfully resisted. How far such violations may be anticipated by political sagacity, is a separate question. Napoleon generally anticipated danger. Whatever of *rebellion* may have been fairly charged against the South in commencing the present revolution, it may be justly claimed that now their fears and excuses have been justified by the subsequent course of the North, and the right to prosecute their insurrection becomes manifest. Our revolutionary fathers struck the first blow.

15. The North took up arms in the beginning for the restoration and preservation of "the Union as it was," under a distinct understanding with the general government that "in its issue the political status of no human being in the country should be changed." THAT UNION was worth preserving. Except a few fanatics, who believed it a rope of sand governed by a compact with the devil, and who had denounced it as such, that Union was all the North desired. A million of clear heads and brave hearts rallied to its standard. They felt that under the Constitution as it is, and as it had always been interpreted, with the honest and faithful enforcement of all laws once made to give effect to that interpretation, that Union

ought not to be broken, ought to be and might be restored and perpetuated. The masses had voted honestly, and intended no wrong to the South. They had only claimed a rather more potential voice in the government than the North had for a long time enjoyed. The South had made, however, another issue—that of Secession. This, or that it had done so with any degree of unanimity and deliberation, the North could not realize.

16. Whether the Union should be disrupted or not, had depended on the North. To the Northern poll it had in 1860 been left by the South. The nomination of Breckinridge had been made for this purpose. It was a mere formality. The vote for Bell had tested the unanimity of the South. The defeat of Douglass persuaded the South, not that the masses of the North were not perhaps alive to the true nature of the crisis, but that the South had not been causelessly alarmed and excited on the subject of threatened violence to their institutions. Believing that with the election of Lincoln the day of compromise had ended in a gloomy nightfall, they appealed, anticipating the danger, to a revolutionary arbiter.

17. The true policy of the federal government in the crisis was evident. Had the real nature of the situation been appreciated, had the administration wisely and promptly given all those pledges which the Chicago platform would have warranted, had it firmly repudiated at its inauguration all intention of admitting radicalism into its counsels, it may safely be said that no blood would have been shed. A convention could have healed the breach. Had it tenaciously adhered in the progress of the war to the only pledge of policy, express or implied, which it did give, as above stated, some hope of reconstruction would still be left. But this has not been done. Radical measures have outraged the local pride and self-love, and embittered the temper of the South. The people and to a great extent the army of the North have been surprised, disappointed, and grieved at these measures, and at other acts popularly considered to be arbitrary interpositions of power unknown to republican systems of government, and uncalled for by the emergencies of the case.

18. The war has to all practical intents and purposes unconstitutional and wrongfully degenerated into a crusade for the abolition of slavery, and the subjection of the South to the absolute control of the North. This will of course be resisted to the bitter end. Death and Extermination will of course be preferred to Subjugation. No moral influence in this state of the case can be brought to bear upon the conflict, so as to attemper it to a spirit of compromise.

19. Nor can the North succeed. It has, by pursuing defective and vicious plans of campaign, gained at best but very indifferent success in the progress of the war thus far. Such victories as it has gained, however creditable to its troops, have been barren of any great results. It may be safely asserted that the physical impossibility of conquering the South by force, has, if no other and

better plans of operation can be suggested, been conclusively demonstrated to every dispassionate mind. This apprehension depresses both army and country. There is certainly a strong re-action going on in the Northern mind. The pride of the soldier citizen of the North is shocked at the late appeal to the negro for aid, and he shrinks from enlistment, and from being called upon to associate with a despised and inferior race, as with his equals in arms. Fanaticism and sectional selfishness are triumphantly pursuing under governmental patronage their own gratification as the sole object of the war. The rights of the white man under the law are encroached upon. The calm counsels of the conservative patriot are despised. They who before aroused the jealousy of the North with the bugbear of South Carolinian ambition and arrogance, are now evidently laboring to place the diadem of a dictator upon the brow of Massachusetts. To this no State west of Lake Champlain will submit, and elements of discord which may eventuate in disruption North, are already at work.

20. The policy and duty of the North are plain. The civilized world demands the termination of this unnatural war. France has begged for it, and will no doubt shortly demand it in a manner, and under assurances from other powers, which cannot be resisted. The Union can only be restored by concessions and compromises of an irrevocable character, and we may return thanks if indeed we shall be able to restore it by offers of justice at this late day. The South has nothing but her impetuosity to atone for, and martyrs enough have been immolated, at the altar of her rashness in commencing this war, to warrant us in excusing her. The Union has heretofore been preserved only by conciliation, and it certainly is worth more to the North, to the American continents, and to the world, than all the negroes, bond or free, that ever have lived, now do, or ever will live. The rescue of the Constitution is of more importance to civilization and man's destiny in the future, than the triumph now or hereafter of all the mad schemes of an impracticable republicanism, which the undisciplined minds of all the fanatics who cumber the earth have ever dreamed. What will the Government do? Is it less magnanimous to acknowledge error, than it will be dishonoring to suffer defeat under perseverance in palpable wrong?

21. But will the South consent to a reconstruction of the Union? It is difficult to imagine why she should not! The time was when it would undoubtedly have been futile, to have referred the issue to the decision of a Convention; but there is no reason why the attempt might not now be made to refer it to Commissioners. Certainly either side would be ready to accept what "is just and equal," and assuredly, now that each side has felt the other's power, and tested the bravery, resources, and endurance of its antagonist, neither side would be so ungenerous as to annex any offensive condition to the bond of Re-union which it might offer, or be disposed to accept.











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